



Opinion Research
Strategic Communication

MEMO

DATE: October 28, 2011

TO: NRDC

FROM: John Russonello, Emma White, and Katie Simmons

RE: National attitudes toward Pebble Mine

Belden Russonello Strategists LLC (formerly Belden Russonello & Stewart) conducted a representative survey of 600 American adults in the continental United States by landline and cell phone from August 18-25, 2011. We also conducted 201 telephone interviews among a representative sample of Alaskan adults. The margin of sampling error is ± 4.0 percentage points for the national study, and ± 6.9 percentage points in Alaska. This memo highlights some of the key findings of the research.

Opposition to Pebble Mine is consistently strong, and the level of opposition increases the more people learn about the mine. In addition, broad majorities in both the lower 48 and Alaska believe the EPA should stop Pebble Mine from being built if studies show it will pollute.

1. Pebble Mine finds strong and deep opposition in the lower 48

In the Mainland U.S., when offered brief rationales for and against the mine, two-thirds (66%) oppose the mine because "Pebble Mine will produce billions of tons of toxic waste and endanger the largest wild sockeye salmon fish population in the world, which is key to the area's economy, culture, wildlife, and ecosystem," while only three in ten (31%) favor it because "building the mine will create several thousand jobs, help the local economy, and provide a large new domestic source for metals the United States needs for its security." Four in ten (40%) strongly oppose. Opposition crosses political boundaries, as majorities of Democrats (75%), independents (71%), and Republicans (53%) oppose building the mine.

View of Pebble Mine after Arguments For and Against (Q12)

	Net favor	Net oppose	Strongly favor	Somewhat favor	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
National total	31%	66%	11%	20	26	40
Democrats	25%	75%	7%	18	22	53
Republicans	46%	53%	19%	27	30	23
Independents	24%	71%	8%	16	27	44

2. Majorities of Mainland Americans and Alaskans believe the EPA should stop Pebble Mine if studies show it will pollute

Opinions of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency are positive-leaning in the lower 48 (38% positive, 22% negative) and divided in Alaska (32% positive, 30% negative), but both groups say that the EPA should act to stop Pebble Mine if its studies show it will pollute the land and water.

Respondents were told that “scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency are conducting research into the possible pollution from development near Bristol Bay.” Majorities in both Alaska (54%) and the lower 48 (59%) say that “if the research shows that Pebble Mine would permanently pollute the land and water” the EPA should stop the mine from being built. Four in ten Alaskans (41%) along with a similar number of Americans (38%) say that the EPA should allow the state of Alaska to decide whether the mine should be built.

3. After hearing arguments from both sides, strong opposition to Pebble Mine increases among Mainland Americans

Respondents were read a list of arguments from both sides of the debate on Pebble Mine. After hearing these statements, over three-quarters (77%) of Mainland American adults are inclined to oppose the mine, including a majority who does so strongly (55%). About two in ten (19%) are inclined to favor the mine. This represents a 15 percentage point increase in strong opposition from the initial informed vote and a 12 percentage point decrease in support. Protecting the wild salmon population, and the industry and people that depend on it, is a strong reason to oppose Pebble Mine.